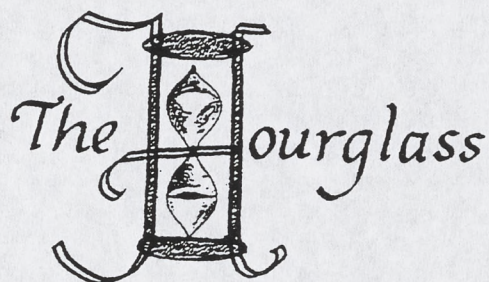


Historical Society of Palm Desert

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Community
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SUMMER 1999

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ROBERT SPIEGEL, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF PALM DESERT Speaker at Historical Society Luncheon May 5, 1999 - Desert Falls Country Club

Dan Callahan, president of the Palm Desert Historical Society, welcomed members and guests to the spring luncheon. There was no business meeting. Minutes and financial reports are available on request.

After the welcome and acknowledgements President Dan brought Mary Safe to the dais to introduce Mayor Spiegel. He prefers to be called Bob. Mary's introduction was lighthearted but left no doubt of our appreciation for the mayor's presence and for the informative message he would bring to us.

Informative it was! The theme, "Retail, the First Twenty-five Years", complete with graphs and slides, illustrated the phenomenal growth of the city. With humor and great timing, the mayor brought the figures alive for us.

In 1973, the year Palm Desert became a city, the total operating budget was \$214,000. For the current fiscal year the total operating budget is in excess of 25 million dollars. Population during the same time span has grown from 3,000 to 42,000.

Using the 10-year period of 1987-1997, the mayor traced taxable sales and retail sales, noting a slight percentage increase in the retail portion of taxable sales. For this reason, the California Retail Association consistently rates Palm Desert as one of the top five cities in the state in growth and stability.

Also, he explained why it is that the city places such great emphasis on retail and tourism. Sales tax is 35% of income and transient occupancy tax is 22%. Service charges bring in 14%, while a half dozen minor sources are recorded in single digits. Where is the money spent:

Police	25%	Parks	9%
Public Works	23%	Fire	7%
Community Development	22%	Interfund Transfers	2%
General Government	12%		

A history of thirteen shopping centers, from Palms to Pine in 1969 to the Gardens on El Paseo in 1998, shows that most development came after the construction of the Palm Desert Town Center, which was a while in the works. "In fact," said the mayor, "most of our residents today don't know that the May Company stood out there by itself for some time before the mall was completed."

H.S. Luncheon (continued)

Bob Spiegel and his wife, Sharon, moved from Connecticut to Palm Desert when Bob agreed to take over management of the new May Company. It had been decided to name the complex the May Company at Palm Center. After a visit from Roy Wilson who was mayor at the time, now County Supervisor Wilson, it was agreed that the mall where the May Company stood and other retailers were scheduled to open later would be called the Palm Desert Town Center. Our 4th District Supervisor has been a persuasive person over the years in his low-key way.

Mayor Spiegel rounded out his talk by stressing prudence the city has shown in balancing new construction with existing businesses. Also, he outlined major changes on the drawing boards for modernizing Palm Desert Town Center. Shoppers will welcome a two-story parking lot which will offer shaded parking in the summer.

Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley have become more of a year-round destination/consumer market. For that reason, fiscal quarters have leveled out, creating a better business climate.

Rather than trace history from the early days when desert land sold for a pittance, in his remarks the mayor stressed the critical importance of retail to continued success and growth. The vital role of the Historic Society is to seek out and preserve records, pre-1973, from the Indian culture forward. Knowing where we were may help to inform the decisions which will shape our future.

President Dan Callahan gratefully received Mayor Spiegel's gift of an album for Society archives. It traces the history of the May Company at Palm Desert Town Center and has many interesting articles about development of the facility and the opening galas, including a number of philanthropic events. They were reported by people like Evelanne Heyman and Frederick Heider, desert boosters and stalwarts whom we remember fondly. The handsome album is on view for the public through June at the Society Office, 72-861 El Paseo.

Thanks to Mary Safe who arranged the wonderful luncheon. It was a great gathering, a highly informative program and an all-around enjoyable time. Thanks, too, to all who attended. It was good to find new faces among those of long time friends. Some seen enjoying the day were: Bob Owen, Phil Franklin, Beverly Riley, Dr. Joe and Fran Lesser, Jackie Doyle, Loretta Riley, Oscar Hurley, Gary Goodsell, Walt Snyder, Dick Oliphant, Marty and Willa McKell, Clifford La Tramboise, Velma Dawson and Genevieve Burke to name a few.

And, most especially, thanks to Mayor Bob Spiegel for his enlightening talk.

"GOODBYE, PAT!" by Doloris Driskel

Many residents from the Coachella Valley came together on March 31 to say goodbye to Pat Wilson, wife of County Supervisor Roy Wilson. This exceptional lady died unexpectedly in her sleep on March 26. To those of us who knew her as a friendly, outgoing wife, mother and grandmother, it is hard to realize that she is gone. Pat never met a stranger. It is a great loss!

My day usually started with a phone call, "What are you doing?" Then Pat would proceed to tell me what she had in mind. For many years her plans involved the Golf Cart Parade, which she loved dearly. Our biggest problems with Pat were having her keep the parade moving and keeping her from marching along with each entry. The Historical Society's entry the last two years was our pride and joy fire truck Engine #1, which Pat and her grandsons helped embellish with her own decorations.

Pat never did anything half way. She was most proud of the things she accomplished related to her involvement in the community. Goodbye, my dear friend; we will miss you!

IN MEMORIAM

Colleen Dion (Mrs. James H.)

Joseph Tobin

Patricia A. Wilson

Memorial Gift received:

For: Pat Wilson

From: Daniel and Barbara Callahan

MARY SAFE – History Buff, Valuable Board Member

Mary Safe is a first-generation American born to Austrian-Hungarian parents, Andrew and Gertrude Weber. Her father came to this country in 1924 along with many of his siblings and in-laws. Later he sent for his wife and their two children to join him. Mary was the youngest, born after they settled in America.

During her growing-up years, two events come to Mary's mind. The first happened during the 1933 California earthquake when water spilled from a water tower that was adjacent to their property. As the family rushed to get out of the house, the icebox fell on them. The second event occurred during the early days of World War II. As the family watched from the second-story sun deck of their home, American artillery shelled an enemy submarine which had slipped in along the Long Beach coast.

At age 13 Mary and her friend, Bonnie, unsuccessfully tried to find a job during the Great Depression. On roller skates they canvassed the industrial area of Vernon. At age 16, while attending John C. Freemont High

School in Los Angeles, Mary and a school chum decided they wanted to assist in the World War II war effort. The two inexperienced youngsters were given a job riveting "bird cages" for airplanes. The giggling girls spent as much time drilling out rivets as they did putting them in, specifications being very strict to avoid flight catastrophes.

Before high school graduation in 1946, Mary accepted a part-time position with Pacific Bell Telephone as an operator. Upon graduation she worked full-time in this work in downtown Los Angeles.

In 1950 she married Carl Safe. Downey, California was their home for the next 40 years. In 1954 just before the first of her two children was born, Mary left the company. She remained a full-time homemaker, raising their son and daughter, until 1968. She returned to Bell Telephone and was involved in many assignments at different locations. Retirement came early in 1982 due to the company's divestiture.

Mary and Carl love to travel and it was an annual activity with their two children. They sought out the small towns on the back roads of America. Memories of going around the southern California area with her father on the Big Red Cars (see the following page) in the 30s enhanced Mary's enthusiasm for these trips. Later, as a twosome, Mary and Carl visited foreign countries.

In 1975 Carl was playing in a golf tournament at Palm Desert Country Club, and they arrived in a severe wind and sand storm. After being assured by the Palm Desert Inn's hotel clerk that "Tomorrow will be beautiful!", they decided to stay the week-end. A "For Sale" sign lured Mary into a house on Minnesota Avenue. They bought and as soon as papers were finalized they celebrated their 25th anniversary by taking a 2-week cruise in the Caribbean. They used the place occasionally and made it their permanent home in 1989 next year will be a Golden for the Safes.

Many organizations claim Mary as a member and office-holder: the Women's Golf Association, the Garden Club, and the Palm Desert Country Club Association. Mary's abiding love of history has drawn her to historical societies where ever she happens to be: Downey, La Quinta, and Palm Desert where she is an active member of the Board and a regular volunteer.



Pacific Electric's "Big Red Cars" operated for the first half of the century providing important service in and around Los Angeles, connecting southern California communities. Lines came east as far as Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

At its zenith, Pacific Electric operated 6200 trains daily over 1061 miles of track. They were wooden cars at first but later were made of steel, even some of aluminum. Fifty cars were built by the Standard Steel Car Company in 1924. The early day speed was 28 m.p.h.; the later World War II trains hurtled down the tracks at 55 m.p.h.

From: Pacific Electric's Big Red Cars, by Raphael F. Long, published by T. C. Phillips.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Eleanor Noyes

Helen C. Cunningham

Genevieve G. Burke

Loretta Riley

Kate Stein

Lloyd & Marilyn Hamlet

Jeff & Joyce Frisco

Hans Thrap-Olsen

Thanks to Contributing Members - Robert & Sharon Spiegel

FOUNDER'S DAY '99 - Double Honors

Society members, friends and guests gathered at the Portola Community Center for the fifteenth year of the awards event. On display was the handsome Clifford W. Henderson trophy, the focal point of admiration. Much camera clicking and I-remember-when conversation flowed.

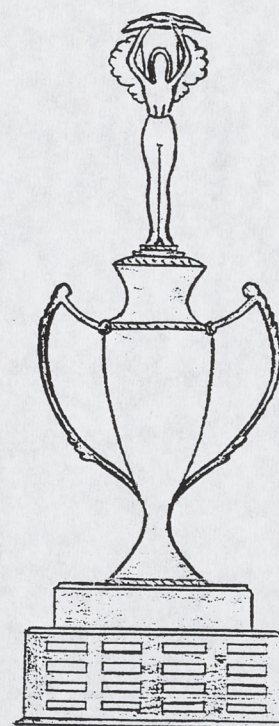
After a period of fellowship, President Dan Callahan invited people to be seated. He welcomed and thanked them for their attendance. Then he called on Marian Henderson to make the presentation, which she does so graciously each year.

Your still-stunned Hourglass editor was this year's recipient. In trying to express my appreciation, I reminisced and, no doubt, rambled about 25 years in Indio and 22 years in Palm Desert. Bob, my husband who died in 1977, and Diven Meredith formed a business partnership in the early 50s which continues today as Meredith & Simpson. They also founded a subsidiary organization called Pressure Cool Company, which utilizes the pieces of equipment they patented for cooling and storage of produce in packing plants.

During those years my role was wife, mom and community volunteer. Our son and two daughters grew up in Indio and all retain a great fondness for the desert.

Next on the agenda, President Dan introduced Richard Kelly, Palm Desert City Councilman and former mayor. He was the recipient of the Founder's Day award in 1998. Dick presented an on-the-spot surprise award to Marian Henderson, paying tribute for her dedicated interest in the Historical Society and for her many accomplishments and contributions to the valley. He noted that desert cities have scheduled Marian Henderson Desert Beautiful Clean-up Days.

Marian knew and loved the desert long before marrying Cliff Henderson and becoming the "First Lady of Palm Desert." As a teenager she hiked desert trails with her brother, Tony. In the 30s she often visited the El Mirador Hotel in Palm Springs with her sister, actress Jean Morgan. While still a student at Hollywood High School, Marian accompanied her sister to a studio and met actors who noticed her beauty and her distinctive voice. That was how her acting career began at age 17. She starred as Marian Marsh opposite the great John Barrymore in the classic film "Svengali." Other pictures followed, until she left the industry for a time for marriage and two children. In over thirty-five motion pictures during her career, Marian starred with William Powell, John Forsyth and other actors whose names bring instant recognition. She says the old movies are being rerun on T.V.



Founder's Day (continued)

President Dan's wonderful helpmeet, wife B. J., had prepared two easel displays featuring photographs and news stories for the two honorees. Marian's was brought out at the last minute, just as she was receiving the award.

The founder of Desert Beautiful in 1962, Marian has received numerous inspiration awards for her work through this organization throughout the Coachella Valley. Also, she served for eleven years on the Board of Desert Hospital and was a board member and patron of Eisenhower Hospital. Two holly oak trees grow on the College of the Desert campus honoring her years on the board of the United Way of the Desert, and a term as president in 1977.

My recognitions came from the College of the Desert Alumni Association and from the Palm Desert Soroptimist Club. These were given for work with the San Geronimo Girl Scout Council, the Friends of the C.O.D. Library and the Visiting Nurse Association, among others

Jean Hollenbeck and Bonnie Bowie presided at the punch bowl and the guest book. Del Davitt brought a packet of materials and pictures for the archives. We saw his head, Ginny Folkers and others huddled over photo identifications.

What a great day! The Society lunches and events are gaining in popularity, but we have a long way to go to reach the success of some of the neighboring Historical Societies. Ed Mullins used to speak admiringly of the annual, old timers picnics held by the Palm Springs Historical Society. People enjoy them so much that it has become a community event. The Coachella Valley Society has its Railroader Party, another winner for history-minded folks

Participation is fun there will be more invitations come join us when you can.

LIVING FOR YOUR 90s**Rancho Las Palmas Marriott Resort & Spa, Fiesta Ballroom**

Society members were thrilled that President Dan Callahan and wife, B.J., represented Indian Wells at the Senior Inspiration Awards in April. Community involvement is a way of life for this well known couple.

B.J. is a retired teacher and was chosen in 1991 for membership in the Desert Sands Unified Educational Foundation Hall of Fame. Two years ago she was named Outstanding Member of Delta Kappa Society, an honorary educator's organization.

Dan has been in business in the Coachella Valley since the 50s, from agriculture to resorts to real estate, always a people-oriented guy. As Doloris Driskel noted when Dan was installed as president of the Historical Society of Palm Desert last year, the Callahans are, first and foremost, a team. They work well together and always have done so.

Parents of a daughter and two sons all born in Palm Desert, they moved to the Deep Canyon area in 1958. Their home was on a street which since has been taken into the city of Indian Wells.

Dan and B. J. have done a wonderful job of presenting the Mini-Muster program for third grade children. It is coordinated by the Historical Society of Palm Desert and operated by the Riverside County Fire Department, Station #33. Now in its 7th year, the event has been brought to more than 2500 children.

For their work, individually and together, the Callahans were prime candidates for the prestigious honor awarded them at Living for Your 90s. The Cove Communities were well represented with honorees Ernie Miehle from Palm Desert and Mike Castenada from Rancho Mirage. Ernie came to Coachella Valley ten years ago, after retirement from the Fleming Company. For the past four years he has given valuable service to the Palm Desert Information Center. Mike is a former Olympic medal winner in track and field who has been dedicated to community service. He has been mentor to students and role model to seniors.

Johnny Mann was the very special guest at this gala affair which annually recognizes individuals over the age of 70 who have maintained active lifestyles and reached out to participate in their communities. Representatives of nine desert cities and two persons from the County of Riverside are honored each year. Congratulations, Dan and B.J. --- and THANKS!

Desert Beautiful award was received by the Society for the second year for the appearance of the Old Fire House and landscaping design. The H.S. owes thanks to the City of Palm Desert.

Photo Identification - Thanks to Caroline Berkey who identified the "man in the glasses" in the last Hourglass as Leland Yost. The two families were valley ranchers and long time friends.

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY - Grateful Thanks

Barbara Steffensmeier.....four aerial views of Palm Desert, Palm Springs and Indio
 From Philip Boyd Estate via.....assorted soft covers on Flora & Fauna, pamphlet on Deep
 Friends of COD Library Canyon Research Center, book on Living Desert
 Gene Swenson.....correspondence re Desert Magazine and Randall Henderson
 Pat (Ward) Ruth.....three sets of postcards, collections made by her father
 Gary Olesen.....glass display case, 72" x 22" x 38" high
 Ann Miller Shaver.....oil painting, desert scene by John Hilton dated 1945

Society members not only are interested in preserving history, they continue to make it:

- Dick and Ginny Folkers just returned from a trip to the Far East where Dick attended the International Rotary conference in Singapore. Dick is president-elect of Palm Desert Rotary.
- Lyn and Ella Manor were featured in the Desert Sun recently. This energetic couple moved here 35 years ago. Ella is the incoming president of the Soroptimist Club.
- Roger Keezer, Society vice-president, was a winner at the Senior Olympic Table Tennis tournament. He hikes and works with Search and Rescue. A man of many talents.
- Jeannie Ahrens and Florence Holdsworth realized plans for an Alaska cruise. Considering our desert heat, that's a cool idea for two lovely ladies.
- Charlie and Joyce White had a "break-down" at Lake Shasta. Fishing was good they threw back the bass and froze the trout. Now they're gone for June.

Visitors to the Old Fire Station:

- J. Phil Franklin has moved back to the desert. He was Palm Desert Bank of America's first manager. President Dan welcomed him warmly at the Desert Falls luncheon.
- Duchess Emerson of Hayden Lake, Idaho is the daughter of Tommy Tomson, a Henderson brother-in-law and landscape architect who helped lay out the townsite of Palm Desert.
- Bert Ripple of Napa, is the son of the Bert who had Ripple Date Garden in Indian Wells. He has three brothers and a sister who remember the desert and the era.
- Several young tourist families came in as a result of seeing the Society item in the "Best Read Guide." Children are always welcome and get a free Polaroid picture with Fire Engine #1.

Did you see Huel Howser's week-long T.V. special on Palm Springs? He spent two days with Frank Bogert and Sally McManus. They toured "The Willows", built by Samuel Untermyer who was a N.Y. attorney; guests included Albert Einstein and Joseph Kennedy. Untermyer brought King Gillette to the desert. Large land holdings which Gillette acquired figure prominently in Palm Desert history.

Did you get your copy of the Society's new membership directory? If not, pick one up during June on Mon./Tues./Thurs. from 10 a.m. till 3 p.m. The office will be dark July and August, but please leave a message for a call back.

Relax, review and recharge during the summer. We look forward to seeing you in the fall with input to move us forward into - dare I say it? - the millennium. It'll be here before we learn to spell it! **HAPPY DAYS!**

Hourglass Editor, Theda Lundquist

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